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The CEA CRITIC

Formerly THE NEWS LETTER of the College English Association

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Agents Of Relation

This his Presidential Address to the Association is a most fitting memorial to the wisdom, grace and humanity of Theodore Spencer.

As teachers of literature in a society that is extremely anxious about the possibility of its continuing welfare, we are naturally concerned with defining as well as we can what it is that literature can **do** to keep that welfare thriving. We need to understand, and to keep on understanding, how literature affects the individual student, how it affects society, and — perhaps most important—how it affects the teacher. And we need to put our definition and our understanding into continual practice.

There are many attitudes to the problem; the extremes, as usual, are the easiest to define. At one extreme is the vast public indifference to what happens in education, especially to education in a non-practical subject like literature, which can be apparently dismissed as a frill, an escape, an ornament whose nature and design do not matter.

At the other extreme, more vociferous when measured in decibels, but representing, numerically, a minute fraction of general opinion, is the view that literature, and the proper study of literature, offers a way, possibly the only way, to spiritual salvation. Voices as different as those of Arnold, Proust, Joyce, and I. A. Richards have been saying, in different intonations and with various emphases, that literature must take the place of religion, that art, especially literary art, represents the only means we have for seeing order and meaning in experience, that literature, of the past and the present, is our only means of preserving values in the dark age whose beginning is now upon us.

It is as dangerous to over-emphasize the importance of literature as to neglect it, and we may see a reaction to this over-emphasis in T. S. Eliot's description of poetry as merely a form of superior amusement and W. H. Auden's definition of it as merely a game. Poetry — literature — is proportionately more than an amusement or a game as it fully expresses the ordered awareness of its author, and as its author has a sufficient personal specific gravity and sufficient emotional resonance to make the full expression of his ordered awareness worth while. But it is not, and should not be, a substitute for religion devotion, even when religious devotion is its subject matter.

To define what literature can **do** is difficult because what it does it does indirectly. When we look for direct results, as we tend to do too often, we misunderstand and falsify its function. We try to get rich too quick. For literature works slowly as well as indirectly; and it does not work on everyone. It may be presumed, however, to work on those who teach it, otherwise they would not have undertaken that exacting task. Let us consider very briefly what the study of literature may be supposed to do to the person who likes it enough to devote his professional life to it.

The medium through which literature works is of course the imagination, an activity which, like poetry itself, has for some time been given, in different circles, both too little and too much importance. It has been defined with an over-intellectual aridity, separated from the rest of the organic unity of which it is in a sense both the root and the flower; it has been credited with world-creating capacities which lead toward solipsistic pride. It may be useful to think of it in a more crude and homely way, restoring it temporarily to the place in the psychological picture which it held for so many fruitful generations as the essential but dangerous and potentially irresponsible medium between the senses and the mind. So seen it becomes connected with action and behavior (which is what we are at the moment concerned with) as it may not do if we think of it in more grandiose or Coleridgean terms.

Literature at work on the imagination so defined is likely to produce, indirectly, various results. Most obviously it can extend awareness by making us conscious of situations we would otherwise ignore, situations which range from those of sensuous delight to that of Dante in Paradise. This extension of awareness allows us to make comparisons, and when we make comparisons we are in a position to gain increased toleration and humility. We may be more disposed to consideration, in all senses of the word.

I am making a plea for the moral, the **indirectly** moral, effect of literature. One of the bad effects of the prestige of science is that its method has been applied too widely to the wrong subjects; literature, like other humanistic studies, has suffered. Both literary scholarship and literary criticism have in the recent past been made too impersonal, too abstract, too cold, too unrelated to behavior. The human imagination, if it is anything, is an agent of relation, and the tudy and enjoyment of literature, employing that agent, are acts of relationship, making us aware of the relationship between the different parts of the work that is studied and enjoyed, of the relationship between the work and the forces that made it, and of the relationship between the work and the ultimate behavior of the student and enjoyer. It is this last relationship we need to emphasize. We need to return, not in innocence but with full consciousness of what it implies, to the simple belief that we should be better people because of what we do. We need to believe this in its application to us as teachers of literature. If the belief is reflected in character and action then we may become to the body of society what our imaginations are to us: agents of relation. No beings are needed more.

Theodore Spencer

Indiana C.E.A.

The newly-affiliated Indiana College English Association will meet at Purdue University, May 13 and 14.

New England C.E.A.

The New England Group will hold its second meeting of the academic year at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Mass., on Saturday, May 7.

Middle Atlantic Group Meeting

The Middle Atlantic Group of C.E.A. will meet at the University of Maryland, College Park, on April 24. T. F. Marshall, Western Maryland College, President.

Copies of "The Survival—Quotient in Teaching Literature" and "Poetry and General Education", our 1948 Chapbooks are still available. 20 cents a copy.

Seven Foot Shelf

(Mr. Glenway Wescott's remarks before the luncheon at the Annual Meeting of C.E.A. were tenographically t r a n s c r i b e d. There follows an unedited selection from his informal comment "about the essentials of the problem of making literature known, and helping it to be read.")

A good many years ago I had a successful novel, "The Grandmothers", and I will tell you the cleverest and unkindest thing that was ever said about any work of mine. It was said by Rebecca West, the English authoress, whom I greatly admire and who, I think, is friendly disposed toward me. But she is a wit and not even her friends are entirely safe from intelligence!

She said, "Mr. Wescott has devised a way of writing about life in his native state of Wisconsin, and the formula is this: There was a little boy who loved his grandmother so much that when he grew up he wrote a book about a little boy who loved his grandmother so much that he wrote a book about a little boy who loved his grandmother," and so on, ad infinitum. She did not say "ad nauseum," but I think that was the idea.

I winced at it, but I may boast I had the courage to laugh at it. I took it seriously, as I think she meant it to be, and I think she helped me to counteract in myself that egocentricity with which so many writers are handicapped. But I often think of that upon occasions like this. I want to beg our pardon in advance, if I speak pretty much in terms of reminiscence. I feel very much the novel ist, in other words, somewhat incompetent in the way of abstract argumentative discourse.

Another embarrassment that I feel is that I happen not to be an educated man. All my life I have expected to be embarrassed, possibly inconvenienced, at not having had the proper education — and I do not think I have been.

I have often wished that I had been taught to work harder, to work in a more regular way, which I think I might have learned in a university, but did not at the time that I went to a university, and not in the university that I went to.

Those were the days of elective education which you may remember. I, as a poor dirt farmer's son from Wisconsin, received

(Continued on Page 6)

THE CEA CRITIC

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Membership in the College English Association $2.00 a year, of which $1.50 is for subscription of the CEA CRITIC. Subscription for Libraries $1.50.

1948

The Association was active in 1948. It added three new regional groups, Indiana, Eastern Pennsylvania, and Southern California. There are now nine regional groups, with others in prospect. The Association published two Chapbooks which were widely and favorably noted. It held the largest and most significant annual meeting since before the war. All regional groups were vigorous, with the New England group exhibiting a revived enthusiasm reminiscent of its early days.

Negotiations carried on during the year have just resulted in the CRITIC's being granted Second Class mail privileges, which will result in a saving of about $20.00 an issue in postage charges. The removal of the Treasurer's office to Brooklyn has increased the ease of operation of both Treasurer and Secretary. A glance at the Treasurer's report will show a small decline in the Association's balance, just about the amount which the Association may expect to save in postage during 1949. An increase in membership and a rise in charges for advertising in the CRITIC have maintained the Association in a sound financial position during the past few years, while all costs were rising—that for printing about fifty percent. It is hoped that the Association may continue to maintain its sound position with the present rate of dues, but increased revenue may become necessary, and it certainly will be if the Association is to increase its scope. The increase in revenue should come from increased membership. Each present member should make sure that his colleagues know of the Association, and should issue them cordial invitations to support it and improve it by sharing in its activities.

ULYSSES for Undergraduates

C. L. Barber, Amherst

My subject is the value of **Ulysses** for teaching undergraduates how to read other books, particularly other novels. After teaching **Ulysses** for the first time, to fifty-five Amherst Juniors and Seniors, in a semester course on Joyce and T. S. Eliot, I am convinced that heterogeneous undergraduates can enjoy it. They can understand it, moreover, as well as they do other works of comparable complexity — better perhaps than many, because **Ulysses** has now become obviously relevant to so much of their own experience. And by understanding it, they can understand a great deal else. But my concern here is not with historical or cultural patterns which students can see by reading **Ulysses**. I want to make a case for **Ulysses** as a Teaching Aid for reading teachers.

The book, notoriously, makes great demands on its readers. But they are not unusual or peculiar demands. What is peculiar is that the demands must be met, in some measure, to read the book at all. Most other books, even very great ones, can be read after a fashion lying flat on your back. But we do not want our students to read in that posture. We want them to take the sort of action that **Ulysses** forces them to take.

First of all, it forces them to go slow. They must attend to the language — to a good part at least of the meaning and interaction of the words — because even the bare events of the story often have to be discovered by imaginative action on the part of the reader. Knowing what happens is often the consummation of understanding what happens. So the book can help to break their practical habit of by-passing most earlier novels. Eight weeks were devoted to reading **Ulysses**, along with about four hundred pages of collateral material. In weekly section meetings, students were responsible for reading designated passages aloud, with exegetical comment. This slow pace never seemed slack.

We want our students to see themselves and symbolic organization,—which in most novels does not obtrude as such, and yet gives the narrative much of its meaning. It is difficult to get students to see this for themselves; too often they get the story from the book, the imaginative organization from the instructor. But in **Ulysses** the imaginative organization is a manifest challenge on the page: why should **this** come after **that?** Why this should come after that is a question, really, about every imaginative novel — but the reader often does not notice the thematic sequence because the narrative sequence is so obvious. Because Joyce breaks the narrative convention, it is easy to construct exercises around particular passages which force the student to bring into focus an environing pattern of themes and symbols. To avoid their by-passing this process of discovery, reading in the more elaborate works of exegesis was deferred until the end of the term.

Ulysses is an obtrusively artistic book. For the general reader, that is a defect, certainly; though one which the book can afford, since it is such very great art. But for learning what literary art is, obtrusiveness is a positive advantage. Another example: we want our students to realize that a style is not merely a personal peculiarity; that style is a way of organizing and giving meaning to experience — for better, and for worse. Joyce's technique of multiple styles makes this fact abundantly obvious: by 57 varieties of mock-heroic talking and writing of the Cyclops scene; by the ladies' page mock-romantics of the Nausicaa episode; and of course by the historical recapitulation at the Hospital. Here again, what is implicit in most books is made manifest: a student has to talk about the function of style merely to say why Gertie MacDowell's True Romances language is juxtaposed with "Refuge of sinners. Comfortress of the afflicted. **Ora pro nobis.**"

This list of things to be learned in reading **Ulysses** could be extended. It amounts to a summary of the points about the nature of literature which are constantly being made by modern criticism and teaching. This is no coincidence. Much new criticism consists of re-reading the old books in the way we have been taught to read by the new books. This process of re-reading is essential, of course, if the old books are not to become irrelevant. A particularly striking case in point here is **The Odessey:** for us, to read **Ulysses** is to re-read Homer. For the student, who is often reading both for the first time, the sort of relevance which Joyce gives **The Odessey** is established in his first encounter. It is established, not as a critical doctrine alone, but as an experience. That, in summary, is my case for **Ulysses:** that it is an experience of reading which makes the student encounter, on the wing, the birds our critical doctrines are designed to trap. The birds, of course, are in every wood; but when you walk slowly through **Ulysses,** they practically fly in your face.

Notes on Mammouth Cave College

From a publisher: "The quotation we particularly desire is in the November issue. The quotation refers to the use being made of Perrin's **Writer's Guide** at the recently organized Mammouth Cave College."

From a member: "Please send me the address of the Mammouth Cave College. Thank you."

From another member: "Who's pulling whose leg? Please, give us more information about this noble institution!"

A member writes that the CRITIC has a "Don't Read Me" look. Any comment?

Van Doren Resignation

Professor Mark Van Doren has resigned as a Director of the Association.

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I'VE BEEN READING

Members are invited to contribute reviews of books, old or new, which they wish to call to the attention of other English teachers. Professor J. Gordon Eaker, the Associate Editor, is in charge of I'VE BEEN READING. He is Head, Department of English, Jersey City Junior College, Jersey City, N. J.

Comments on reviews will be welcomed.

ASSOCIATE HERMITS

It was the nineteen-cent sign that caught my eye. I had picked out three books on the stand because of interesting book plates, which I would remove and add to my collection, when the title of one of the books fascinated me: **The Associate Hermits** (Harper and Brothers, 1899), by Frank Stockton.

The Associate Hermits is one of the most quietly charming and pleasantly literate works that I have come across in a long time. With expert ease, Stockton develops a group of really real, mostly likable characters, and carries them deftly through a series of humorous situations which never for a moment lost this reader's interest. After our recent deluge of keep-it-up-interminably-Ambers, the four love stories which Stockton manages to juggle at one and the same time seem delightfully vernal. They bring back one's innocency, and it proves good!

Certainly, no one should miss the Bishop, who, in explaining his method of teaching young ladies to become kindergarten teachers, declares: "My object . . was to make the operation of teaching interesting to the teacher. It struck me very forcibly that a continuance of a few years in the present inane performances called kindergartening would infallibly send to our lunatic asylums a number of women, more or less young, with more or less depleted intellects. The various games and exercises I devised were very interesting, and I am sure I had scholars who never intended to become kindergarteners, and who studied with me solely for their own advantage."

It should be mentioned that the Bishop's sympathy seems to have been aroused by a realistic attitude which he himself best explains: "I know very well that it is not at all to my credit to dislike children, but I said I would be honest, and I am. I do dislike them—not their bodies, but their minds. Children, considered physically, are often pleasant to the view, and even interesting as companions, providing their innate juvenility is undisturbed; but when their personalities are rudely thrown open by a teacher, and the innate juvenility prematurely exposed to the air, it is something so clammy, so chilly to the mental marrow, that I shrink from it as I would shrink from the touch of any cold, clammy thing."

Stockton knows people, knows how to satirize pleasantly, knows how to WRITE. What an example for some of our book-of-the-monthers! What a relief from the exposed maggots of the mind! What a release from repressions and frustrations!

Ted Robins,
San Bernardino Valley College

MIDWAY

The new plays that I have seen prompt me to question what relation my standards in teaching modern drama have to the contemporary theatre. Jean Giraudoux's **The Mad Woman of Chaillot** and Robert Morley and Noel Langley's **Edward, My Son** have maintained a high standard of theatre. Superlative acting in both instances has created on the stage the illusion amidst emotional conflict altogether satisfying to the playgoer. But the response one gives in the theatre is quite enough!

The Respectful Prostitute, notwithstanding Ann Dvorak's playing, appeared confused in dealing with the problem of lynching chiefly because there seemed to be intended wit in Mr. Sartre's depiction of the Negro charged with raping a prostitute, an uncomely jest! Sartre's **The Red Gloves** proved to be moving melodrama, but the author's representation that the American version with its anti-communist slant was contrary to his writing added an extra paradox to his paradoxical existentialism.

Richard Hughes' **Minnie and Mr. Williams,** despite the comedy of Josephine Hull's acting, turned up with a third act quite ridiculous in a "comedy of good and evil." Though the first two acts appeared in the tradition of the morality play, decisiveness was lacking in the end when no one seemed to know what was good or evil.

Skilfully constructed as were Moss Hart's **Light Up the Sky** and Robert McEnroe's **"The Silver Whistle"** for Broadway entertainment, surely these comedies are not intended to foster insight and understanding of humanity. The version of life they offer is as artificial as a china egg, albeit smooth and glossy. On the other hand Joseph Hayes' **Leaf and the Bough,** like Tennessee Williams' **Summer and Smoke,** had the stuff of life, notwithstanding lack of selection of what was important to the playgoer.

Howard Lindsay and Russell Crouse settled down comfortably again with Clarence Day's book to give **Life With Mother,** adroitly revising the tried and true devices of **Life With Father.** This animated family album, for all its dexterity in rapid sequence of incidents, has developed personalities. And for that, so has Maxwell Anderson's **Anne of the Thousand Days,** or is it the illuminating acting of Rex Harrison and Joyce Redman in the leading roles? But I listened in vain for a metaphor or a bit of imagery to heighten Mr. Anderson's dialogue, save in the songs sung by the boy choristers.

Superlative acting one finds on nearly every Broadway stage. But insight, and understanding of man's plight in the present situation, seem to this playgoer utterly lacking. Some may say that entertainment is enough, but teachers of the drama know that insight and understanding of life are necessary to the illusion created on the stage.

Wilbur D. Dunkel,
Univ. of Rochester

ANNUAL MEETING

Four items of formal business were transacted at the Annual Meeting. The first was a unanimous expression of appreciation to Professor Jess H. Jackson for his services as Treasurer to the Association.

The second was passage of the resolution already printed in the CRITIC determining what part of the annual dues should be considered a subscription to the CRITIC.

The third was the passage of the following resolution proposed by the Rocky Mountain Group of the Association: "Be it resolved that the College English Association go on record as urging accrediting agencies to adjust the large student work load now being carried by teachers of English in many secondary schools; and as urging school officials wherever possible to lighten the supervisory load of extra-curricular work now carried by many English teachers." The Meeting authorized the Executive Secretary to appoint a committee which should bring this resolution to the attention of accrediting agencies and take appropriate action in urging them to adopt the policies recommended. The committee was instructed to bring in a report on what it had found possible to achieve at the next Annual Meeting. Membership of the committee is nearly complete, and will be announced soon.

The fourth item of business was passage of a motion asking members of the Panel on "The Ph. D., Past, Present, and Future", together with any others felt desirable by the President and the Executive Secretary, to present recommendations in the form of a report for general circulation. The membership of this committee will be announced soon, and it is hoped that the Report will be ready by the time of the Annual Meeting.

The President's Address and a report of Mr. Glenway Wescott's remarks appear in this issue. It is hoped to present Professor Duthie's discussion of Shakespeare for the Undergraduate in an early CRITIC.

The Association has expressed its warm appreciation to Columbia University for being so cordial a host, and those at the meeting found the Men's Faculty Club more than gracious in providing lunch for a great many more than had made reservations. Finally, special mention should be made of Professor O. J. Campbell's remarks in opening the morning session: "I feel it is ironical that I am here this morning, because I was one of those who vigorously opposed the founding of the College English Association. But I am happy to acknowledge to you that I was wrong, and to welcome the Association here at Columbia." Graciously done, Sir, and most ordially appreciated.

TREASURER'S STATEMENT FOR 1948

Balance—as of January 1, 1948		$1,429.17
Receipts—1948		
Dues	$ 537.25	
Subscriptions	1,762.85	
Advertising	1,258.70	
Publications	70.12	
Library Subscriptions	34.60	
Appointment Bureau	258.00	
	$3,971.52	$3,971.52
Disbursements—1948		
Wages	$1,579.31	
Stationery, Equipment	769.43	
THE CRITIC	1,035.90	
Chapbooks	396.00	
Postage	290.87	
Annual Meetings	197.09	
Miscellaneous	43.75	
	$4,212.35	$4,212.35
Balance—as of January 1, 1949		$1,188.34

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Bulletin Board

Kenyon School

Courses at the Kenyon School of English, June 23 to August 6, 1949: **Studies in Drama**, Eric Bentley; **Dostoevsky and Tolstoy**, Philip Rahv; **Keats**, John Crowe Ransom; **Studies in English Prose**, Herbert Read; **Techniques of Fiction**, Mark Schorer; **Wordsworth**, Lionel Trilling; **Theory of Literature**, Rene Wellek; **The English Lyric**, Yvor Winters. For Bulletin, Address Dean C. M. Coffin, Gambier, Ohio.

From the Bulletin:

"The educational philosophy of the School turns on the belief that the usual college and university courses in English have not discharged their responsibility for the art which is in their keeping. For a long time it has been noticed that their appeal to the abler and more spirited students has been lessening. It is not a novel impression that this is because their devotion to their texts commonly stops short of the stage at which the texts are taken as literature. They expend very nearly their entire energy upon disciplines which are philological, historical, biographical, bibliographical, and ideological. But the able students become too well aware that the imperative and exciting activity of literary criticism is going on outside the academy. They are not being trained, and perhaps not even being encouraged, to form literary judgments, and they are not content with the recital of facts which are important, but largely sub-literary, and which are not being consistently employed with intelligent purpose. The disaffection of the students is just. The critical sense grasps at the human meaning of the profound experience which is art, and would seem well entitled to some educational provision."

Canterbury College

Canterbury College, Danville, Indiana, is planning a conference on English, April 8 and 9, 1949. Bertha M. Watts, Head of English Department, in charge.

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Teacher Training

I feel A. E. Johnson in the December '48 CRITIC has the better of the argument when he rebuts Paul Reynolds' September query, "How shall we fight the pernicious habit of finding a moral in every piece of serious literature?" with his position that "moral neutrality is not possible to a moral being . . ."

If part of our job is to help students re-examine their present values and formulate better ones in the light of their educational experience, then I don't see how we can escape discussing philosophies of life. To do less, it seems to me, is teacher truancy.

Pres. Havens of Wilson College said recently that it is the function of democratic education to provide students with the kind of experience that develops responsible behavior. You can't discuss "responsibility" for five minutes without running into moral concepts.

Now certainly there is a satisfactory and an unsatisfactory way to do this. The instructor must be sympathetic to all expressions of viewpoint. He should not blame or, for that matter, praise a student for any conviction he holds. The instructor must be courteous and humble in stating his own conclusions on an issue, but ultimately he must return to an evaluation based upon his own concept of the meaning of life.

Marius Risley,
Univ. of Buffalo

The **Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin** ($2.50), the first authoritative edition, and **Benjamin Franklin's Memoirs** ($12.50), a parallel four-text edition, head the 1949 Spring list of the University of California Press.

"The Pasture"

I agree with William S. Long (CEA CRITIC, November 1948) that Lawrance Thompson's analysis of Robert Frost's "The Pasture" merely as a love poem falls far short of the point and I further agree with Mr. Long's own interpretation of the work as an invitation of the poet to share "the recorded journeys of his spirit." My only objection to Mr. Long's views is that they do not go far enough in developing the metaphor of the poem as a whole. Frost is inviting his readers to journey with him, as Mr. Long states, but the purpose of the journey seems to me to go beyond "tender experiences" alone.

Like many of Frost's works, this one deals with the process of spiritual maturation, of intellectual growth through love, self-reliance, and the devoted seeking of truth. (See also "Wild Grapes", "Good-Bye and Keep Cold", "Birches", "The Mountain" and many others.) Truth, according to legend, lies at the bottom of a well, and this Truth is often obscured by the dead leaves of custom, tradition, outworn ideas, and the like. To clear away these **impedimenta** causes a certain amount of confusion which temporarily clouds the well and makes it necessary for us to wait until the water clears. But Truth does not emerge by well-gazing alone; it must also grow through love and through past experience. Hence the charming image of the cow licking the tottering calf which, until its legs are stronger, must rely upon the older generation. Couldn't Frost be suggesting the need for new values and new truths developed through the help of the old (Custom, tradition, the past if you will)? Or couldn't he be suggesting his own role as guide in aiding his readers to see the image beneath the gradually clearing waters?

Rod W. Horton,
School of Commerce,
New York University

"ALL . . . LOVE POEMS"

("By the way, the response to my letter has been gratifying. Obviously people read The CRITIC. Even Mr. Thompson, whom I criticized, wrote me a generous, interesting letter." William S. Long. This letter is printed below with Mr. Thompson's permission.)

My dear Mr. Long:

I am glad that you challenged my interpretation of Robert Frost's eight-line poem entitled "The Pasture" because you provided me with a chance to agree that your interpretation is correct. As you have so convincingly shown, **"The Pasture"** has served as a prefatory "invitation" to readers of Frost, ever since its first appearance in **North of Boston.**

Now that I have agreed with you, however, permit me to elaborate my reasons for believing that this "occasional" use of the poem is a secondary use; that primarily the poem was conceived and projected as a love poem — a one-sided conversation in which a lover urges his beloved to come out and enjoy a few minutes of a spring day with him as he goes about his mingled work-and-play in the pasture. You find the two stanzas unsuited to such an interpretation, and yet the title seems to me to unify the invitation even as the sense of the lines suggest that the two stanzas represent merely two aspects of a single going-out: to clean the spring in the pasture and to fetch the calf in the pasture. Each aspect offers the kind of emotional experience lovers like to share.

There is considerable contextual evidence which supports my interpretation. As I suggested in **Fire and Ice** (p. 129), "The Pasture" is enriched if it is read **after** one has been reading other love poems such as "Meeting and Passing," "Flower-Gathering," "A Dream Pang," "Going for Water," "A Late Walk," "Putting in the Seed," "The Telephone," and "A Line Storm Song." Each of these is a one-sided conversation; each of these is in whole or in part a dramatized instance of love-making Furthermore, in each of these poems the presence of the beloved-as-listener is subtly revealed to the reader by the author's technical skill in giving particular significance to that pronoun made sacred when used between lovers: the word "you." For example, you will notice that "A Late Walk" holds the pronoun completely out of sight until the very last word of the last line, and the reader comes upon it with a realization that it brings the entire poem into focus. Does it imply that the author is speaking to the reader — to any reader? Try to find evidence for such an interpretation in other poems, and it becomes clear that Frost rarely (if ever) uses the pronoun "you" as a term of all-inclusive address to the general reader. Consider the specific value reserved for it in the dedication to **Mountain Interval** (1916); then consider the specific value for it in "The Pasture."

(Continued on Page 5)

'SYMBOLS AHOY'

We submit our praise for Alexander Cowie's sensible advice on reading **Moby-Dick** (January issue), with a reminder that this rich trove of symbols is available in the edition prepared by Willard Thorp, himself a respecter of its inexhaustibleness. As a further 'specific against symbol-hunting', it contains authentic whaling pictures, from which your students may know what a trypot or a top-gallant looks like.

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"ALL . . . . LOVE POEMS"

(Continued from Page 4)

Now let me argue on your side. Obviously "The Pasture" (being poetry) has symbolic values which are not exhausted by one limited approach. Why should it not lend itself to the approach which interests you — the invitational or introductory value of the symbolic language is certainly not antipathetic to the more intimate "invitational value" which seems to me of primary significance. The best support for arguing that there was a primary and secondary value to the poem, in the mind of the author, is given by excerpting a sentence from Frost's explanation of why he chose what poems he chose for Whit Burnett's anthology entitled, **This is My Best:**

". . . . I have made this selection much as I made the one for my first book, **A Boy's Will,** and my second book, **North of Boston,** looking backward over the accumulation of years to see how many poems I could find towards some one meaning it might seem absurd to have had in advance, but it would be all right to accept from fate after the fact. . . ."

For present purposes, I interpret that sentence to mean that while it might seem absurd to have had in advance the idea of writing a poem like "The Pasture" to serve as introduction to **North of Boston,** it did not seem absurd to recognize, after the fact, that "The Pasture" could help to unify **North of Boston** by standing as door-opener. On the other hand, to interpret "The Pasture" as Frost's invitation to come in and enjoy with him the beauties of nature — a pasture spring and a little calf, for example — is entirely foreign to Frost's purpose in **North of Boston,** which is, as he so pointedly states in the dedication, "This book of People." In that sense, then, the value of such a "grace-note" as the eight-line poem is its power to concentrate the attention on **people** — on the hesitant lover whose love-making is oblique and shy enough to have value as poetry.

I have never considered it courteous to ask Mr. Frost for help in interpreting any of his poems, and my interpretation of "The Pasture" was published in 1942 without any assurance that Mr. Frost would approve of it—if he ever bothered to read it. Five years later, however, my attention was called to something I might have seen earlier: a Robert Frost issue of the Amherst College literary magazine **Touchstone,** issued in February 1939. In the article entitled "Two Memoirs of Frost" (p. 20), E. A. Richards writes, ". . . . I remember his saying something to me about 'The Pasture Spring.' It was almost twenty years ago and I mustn't hope to quote him exactly, but it was something like this. '**There** is a poem about **love** that's new in treatment and effect. You won't find anything in the whole range of English Poetry just like that.'" (Bold face mine.)

If you like, you may argue that Mr. Richards' anecdote supports only your interpretation of "The Pasture." I think it supports both interpretations, for it reminds me of a time, several years ago, when someone spoke up from an audience to ask Mr. Frost if he would read one of his "love poems." Fond of serious joking, he parried nicely by protesting, "All my poems are love poems."

Very cordially yours,

Lawrance Thompson.

Liberal Education in a Democratic Society

The preservation and the extension of democracy in the United States depend upon the liberal education of the people. The purpose of genuine liberal education, however, is not directly to support and safeguard democracy, but indirectly to make a truly democratic social order possible by enabling a constantly increasing plurality of citizens to become wise, virtuous, and free men. Between education and democracy there is a circular relation: each must depend upon the other to improve it. The more liberal education we have, the more democracy we shall have; the more democracy we have, the more liberal education we shall need to make that democracy function successfully. Democracy can be extended and perfected only through an educational discipline which will make the individual citizen a person whose mind is free to think intelligently and whose will is educated to the practice of the moral virtues.

Of education in general the United States certainly has today, in comparison with the rest of the world, a great abundance; but very little of it is the kind that produces the free, wise, and virtuous citizens which a healthy and advancing democracy needs. From our colleges liberal education has almost vanished. The chief cause of this deplorable condition is the elective system, which does not require the student to become proficient in the liberal arts—the arts of thinking and communicating, both linguistic and mathematical—and which permits him to remain ignorant of all but a few of the great books. These books are the classics of literature, philosophy, religion, and the several sciences—the works which one must read if one is to understand the present in relation to, and in the light of, the past. Under the elective system, vocationalism and professionalism have crowded liberal education almost completely out of the picture. Vocational training is necessary and good; but if men and women are to be free citizens in a democratic society, it must not usurp the place which rightfully belongs to liberal education.

We need (to quote the St. John's College Catalogue) "the universal distribution of critical intelligence, a minimal intellectuality which can distinguish between fact and fiction, between principle and case, between opinion and insight, between propaganda and instruction, between truth and falsity. This degree of intellectual training is absolutely necessary for the highest activities of men in a democratic society, namely for both individual and common deliberation and decision in practical affairs."

Since 1865, according to historian Ralph Gabriel, the United States has been moving slowly toward a limited degree of national collectivism. The most significant manifestation of it in our time is seen in the attempts at national planning under the New Deal. Now, collectivism need not result in the serious diminution of essential individual liberty. Collectivism, as the success of many of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's domestic policies has shown, can be made to serve the democratic ideal of the free individual. But the course of events in Europe has taught us how easily collectivism can become totalitarianism, how national planning can become autarchy. That is what will happen here unless, as Walter Lippman says, "passion and self-interest can be subdued by benevolent intelligence." The benevolent intelligence that can subdue passion and self-interest is to be found only in liberally educated men and women. It is not to be found in illiberally educated specialists. Such specialists are the creation of our monopolistic capitalism. Too selfishly stupid to have a broad social philosophy, our ruling capitalists—constituting what Woodrow Wilson called an "invisible empire" which, behind a facade of democratic institutions, has dominated American political and economic life—have preferred the specialized mind, trained to the highest degree in science and mechanics, because that type of mind is most useful to them in their acquisitiveness. As a consequence of the overemphasis upon science and technology and of the concentration upon specialization, the country is deficient in the administrative intelligence needed to govern a complex social order. For, as Brooks Adams explained in his **Theory of Social Revolution,** "modern society, if it is to cohere, must have a high order of generalizing mind —a mind which can grasp a multitude of complex relations". And that is a kind of mind which only a balanced liberal education can produce.

Joseph Durfee,
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SEVEN FOOT SHELF

(Continued from Page 1)

a scholarship from the University of Chicago, where I was put immediately into something called "English I." They asked us all to write a fairly important theme paper, and we were supposed to consult our instructors as to what we should write about. I went up to him and said I would like to trace the changes in the technic of dramaturgy in the work of Maeterlinck, in the thirty-seven plays he had written to that date.

The instructor said, "You will never be able to do it; you won't have time to read the thirty-seven plays."

I said, "I am prepared to do it right now; I have already read the plays."

He said, "Good heavens, then we will exempt you from all this."

From that point on I was not required to do anything at the University of Chicago. I was allowed to take the courses that pleased me the most. I took a course in post graduate work in English essays, in the second half of the century. I took a course in the nineteenth century novel. I took a course in the contemporary novel. And in all that time I did not do one hour of homework. I could not add and subtract when I went to the University, and I cannot add and subtract now. I had not one hour of laboratory science of any kind, so that I now find it, in these days, rather difficult to read the New York Times.

Now, I do not suppose it is like that any more. In fact I hear very different news from the University of Chicago, now—and I do not like all that I hear. It seems that they are going to put out another "five foot shelf." In fact, it is going to be seven feet long this time.

They feel they are doing a splendid thing. Actually, I think the "five foot shelf" was one of the most damnable factors against culture in country life, at least in my kind of lower middle class home, because the only books one had in homes that I came from, were that shelf. That was "literature." You would take a book down, you would look into that book—all these terrible old texts, all these moldy translations — and you just thought, "That is not for me." They are not, I understand, making one single new translation for the new seven foot shelf. They are just going to do another marketing job.

I am told, also, that they own the Encyclopedia Britannica. If I were a university and I owned an encyclopedia, it seems to me I would turn the whole curriculum topsy-turvy and make everybody work on it. The kids in the classes could be made to revise the minor entries; the professors could meet together and decide what new things should be included. And the best could write them or farm them out. Then you would have the sort of life you get in the universities in the sciences. I think it has penetrated the scientific culture with a sense of purpose, of which we have lost a great deal.

I have a young nephew who became a Shakespeare lover in a very good prep school that he went to. Now he is at one of the most important Eastern universities. He immediately took a Shakespeare course. He came to me and complained very bitterly. This was a freshman course, and he said he had discovered the instructor was using Shakespeare as a disciplinary measure in the hopes of making it difficult enough to drive out a certain number of G.I.'s that they had too many of, and discourage them.

The course in Shakespeare that he was getting was a play a week, with an examination entirely on a factual basis. "What is the first sentence in the third scene of such a play? Who is on stage when so and so says this?" You know what I mean. And there was a set of catch questions. very, very severe.

I consoled him, but I must say that I felt rather bitter about the thing. I felt perfectly certain that one could see in his own case he would turn out all right; but I also felt certain there were boys in that class who would make a vow never to read another of Shakespeare's plays as long as they lived.

Then he came to me the other day. He is now taking a course in comparative literature. He told me he was reading Victor Hugo's "Notre Dame de Paris." Why? Because it is required reading. I asked him, "Doesn't your professor know it is very little better than 'Gone With the Wind'?" Nobody reads it; certainly not in France. I haven't read it since I was a child. I asked him if he knew Victor Hugo was the greatest lyric poet of the nineteenth century in France. He had not heard anything about that at all.

The point I want to make about that is that I think the hop, skip and jump courses are all bad, whether they are made for disciplinary purposes or whether they are a matter of reviewing the whole course of English literature so that people shall be able to make passable talk in a cultivated way when they meet one another. I think it is impossible to know English literature and to communicate the knowledge of the heart and the significance of the spirit at any such speed as that which is prescribed in a great many curricula. It must be knowledge with enthusiasm.

I do not mean to belittle scholarship. I am not speaking as a presumptuous or potential professor. I am speaking entirely as an ex-student.

I certainly think, in teaching anything to do with literature, one should aim to separate the bright, ambitious boys with the real interest in literature, somehow, and then make them work very, very hard. I do not think that a great or an extensive culture is available to, or even necessary for, a great number of boys who are now going to universities. I think they just walk through it or drudge through it. If they walk through it, they have nothing. If they drudge through it, they have a scunner against books.

At the University of Chicago in my day there was one professor who seemed to have a much profounder temperament than any of the others. He was more moving, and a more appealing person, as a man. We loved him. I took a course with him in the nineteenth century novel. That was just toward the end of the war. He was a pacifist and very active around Chicago in combatting the war intolerance, the injustice, that was worse at the end of that war than at the end of this war, I think. All of that made him feel a certain scorn for what he had to do at the University.

On the day he began his course in the nineteenth century English novel, he said, "I suggest that you look upon this course as an exercise in getting through a vast mass of printed material in a very short time. I feel I really must warn you that really not any of it is worth reading fo its own sake, in times like these."

I was shocked at the time I heard it. I thought it was a paradox. It wasn't really a paradox it was a tragedy. He had, tha pacifist professor, a son whom h adored, and that son was killed i the war—and at the very end o the war. He had heard about i in September or October. Ther came the day of the false Armis tice. I was sitting in his clas when the cries of "peace, peace went up on the campus. He wa lecturing on Sir Charles Grandi son, with his old Harvard notes He turned the page over an stood, with the paper in his han and all the life went out of hi face, and of his body. It was a though his memory had forsake him; his soul had forsaken him He had a look of emptiness an docility—like an animal when i is ill. Somebody stood up. W thought he was going to fain away. We all knew he was feel ing deeply, and what he was feel ing.

Then he got control of himsel again and turned over anothe page and went on. I was reall bitter, even though I thought i was a very good experience fo a young man, for a would-b novelist. Because the teaching o old literature, and even the writ ing of new novels, is folly unles the material in question, the ra material of which one writes, th books which one is teaching, ca be related to the matters of fac and the problem of spirit of th reader and the writer. The re lation must be made, otherwise great deal too much money being spent on universities.

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